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DIVISION OF PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES –OFFICE OF THE DEAN

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

12 February 2007

The Honorable Sam Farr
U.S. House of Representatives
100 West Alisal Street
Salinas, CA 93901

Dear Representative Farr,

I support designation of Big Creek as a Wild & Scenic River. The protection afforded by such designation will complement current protection of the creek and its tributaries afforded by their inclusion in the University of California's Landels-Hill Big Creek Reserve.

Landels-Hill Big Creek Reserve comprises nearly 4,000 acres approximately centered around the mouth of Big Creek on the Coast, and extending eastward to nearly the crest of the Santa Lucia Mountains. The mission of the Reserve is to preserve the character of included lands, and to protect ecosystem function therein, so that the Reserve will always provide opportunities for research and teaching especially at the university-level. Currently, the reserve receives approximately 3,500 person-days of use annually, especially by scientists and by students on field trips offered as part of university courses. It is a unique facility on the Central Coastal of California.

Big Creek and its tributaries are an integral part of Landels-Hill Big Creek Reserve, and they represent an important connection between the terrestrial Reserve and the adjacent Big Creek Marine Reserve. They also provide spawning habitat for endangered Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), which have been studied extensively in the Reserve. Therefore I am very keen to ensure that the creek and its tributaries are thoroughly protected.

The proposed protection levels for these waters range from Wild to Recreational, to accommodate current levels of development both in the Reserve and in private holdings within the Reserve. Wild & Scenic designations would augment protection already in place in the Reserve and therefore would be consistent with the University's mission of preservation, research and teaching at Landels-Hill Big Creek Reserve. I support such designation.

Sincerely,

Kurt F. Merg

Resident Director
HC 67 Box 1679
Big Creek Reserve
Big Sur, CA 93920